

Message Text

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TAGS: PEPR, MILL, UR, XF
SUBJECT: SOVIET MEDIA TREATMENT OF SADAM HUSSEIN'S
PRESS CONFERENCE AND ALI NASER MUHAMMED'S INTERVIEW

REF: BAGHDAD 1557
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SUMMARY: SOVIET CENTRAL PRESS PRESENTATION OF
RECENT PRESS CONFERENCE REMARKS BY IRAQI STRONG
MAN SADAM HUSSEIN AND NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW BY
PDRY PM ALI NASER MUHAMMED PROVIDES INDICATION OF
SOVIET CONCERN OVER STATUS OF SOVIET-IRAQI
RELATIONSHIP AS WELL AS OF SOVIET SENSITIVITY OVER

ESTABLISHMENT OF "BASES" IN PDRY. END SUMMARY.

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. AUGUST 1 CENTRAL PRESS CARRIES TASS BAGHDAD REPORT ON IRAQI RCC VICE CHAIRMAN SADAM HUSSEIN'S JULY 18 PRESS CONFERENCE AS WELL AS TASS BEIRUT ARTICLE ON PDRY PM ALI NASER MUHAMMED'S RECENT INTERVIEW IN LEBANESE PAPER AN-NAHAR. REPORT ON HUSSEIN'S INTERVIEW IS MORE OR LESS CONFINED TO PORTION DEALING WITH SOVIET-IRAQI RELATIONS AND SOVIET PRESENCE IN HORN OF AFRICA (REFTEL, PARA 5). ACCORDING TO TASS, SADAM HUSSEIN ADMITTED POSSIBILITY THAT DIFFERENCES MIGHT ARISE BETWEEN IRAQ AND ITS FRIENDS, BUT HE THEN DENIED THAT SOVIET-IRAQI RELATIONS WERE IN STATE OF "DEEP CRISIS." EVEN IF CRISIS DID ARISE, HE SAID, IRAQ WOULD NOT CONDUCT ITS POLICY TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION IN THE SAME CAPRICIOUS WAY AS SOME OTHER THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES (READ EGYPT). ACCORDING TO TASS, SADAM HUSSEIN CONCLUDED BY NOTING SOVIET AND CUBAN PRESENCE IN HORN -- AT REQUEST OF ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT -- AND BY CHARGING THAT AFTER 200 YEARS OF WESTERN BLACKMAIL, OPPRESSION, AND ROBBERY IN AFRICA, THE WEST HAD NO RIGHT TO SPEAK OF SOVIET PRESENCE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA.

2. TASS REPORT ON ALI NASER MUHAMMED'S INTERVIEW LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONCENTRATED ON HIS DENIAL OF "CONJECTURES" THAT PDRY HAD EXTENDED SOME SORT OF NAVAL PRIVILEGES (L'GOTY) TO SOVIET UNION IN EXCHANGE FOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. HE CHARACTERIZED "RUMORS" ABOUT SOVIET NAVAL BASE ON PERIM AND SOCOTRA ISLANDS AS PART OF HOSTILE CAMPAIGN AGAINST PDRY AND OFFERED TO LET VISITORS COME TO THESE ISLANDS AND SEE FOR THEMSELVES. ACCORDING TO TASS, HE ALSO REJECTED "CLAIMS" CONCERNING SOVIET-CUBAN-ETHIOPIAN BASES IN PDRY ITSELF. END UNCLASSIFIED.

3. COMMENT: SIGNIFICANCE, AS SEEN FROM MOSCOW, DOES NOT LIE IN WHAT WAS ACTUALLY SAID, BUT RATHER IN WHAT MOSCOW HAS CHOSEN TO HIGHLIGHT OR TO PLAY DOWN. IN THAT REGARD, SADAM HUSSEIN'S REMARKS ARE PRESENTED AS A FRANK ADMISSION THAT PROBLEMS IN SOVIET-IRAQI RELATIONS DO EXIST (ALTHOUGH NO MENTION IS MADE OF HIS COMMENTS ON ROLE OF IRAQI COMMUNISTS IN THE FRONT), BUT ALSO AS A FORM OF REASSURANCE THAT THE IRAQIS WILL NOT ALLOW THESE DIFFERENCES TO GET OUT OF HAND AND DISRUPT WHAT MOSCOW LIKES TO CALL THE "STRATEGIC" RELATIONSHIP. BOTH SADAM

HUSSEIN'S CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE SOVIET PRESENCE
IN THE HORN AND ALI NASER MUHAMMED'S DENIALS OF
THE EXISTENCE OF SOVIET-CUBAN BASES IN PDRY INDICATE
TO THE KNOWLEDGEABLE SOVIET READER THAT THE SOVIET
UNION DOES HAVE A MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE REGION,
BUT IS SENSITIVE TO WESTERN CHARGES THAT MOSCOW
INTENDS TO MAKE THIS PRESENCE PERMANENT. TOON

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